What You Should Know about Lead Poisoning

A Resource Manual for Childcare Providers
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INTRODUCTION
Introduction for Childcare Providers

As daycare providers, caring for young children (particularly those under the age of six), you can be a critical link in helping to reduce lead poisoning. You are not only educators of young children but also sources of information for their parents and guardians. In both of these roles, you can serve the interests of children by becoming informed about the problems of lead poisoning and by sharing this information with the families of the children you care for.

Moreover, as childcare providers, you are required by law to provide safe environments free of hazards.

The materials that follow are designed to provide the information that childcare workers need. They include the following:

- Fact sheets about the symptoms of lead poisoning, what to do if lead poisoning is suspected, how to handle lead hazards in and around the home, foods and other dietary adjustments that may help to reduce lead’s harmful effects, and management techniques for challenging children.
- Information about State of Connecticut regulations pertaining to lead, particularly as they relate to childcare providers.
- A curriculum designed to teach young children about lead-safe behaviors.
- Information sheets to be given to parents or guardians.
- Lists of resources (agencies) that can provide additional information.

Sponsoring Agencies

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programs, radio and television programs, newsletters, publications, and correspondence courses.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health implements and coordinates lead poisoning prevention activities in the state. Its Connecticut Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program develops policies and regulations and helps to educate the lay public and professional communities about this issue.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–New England implements and coordinates environmental lead activities in the New England states. Some of its regulatory and nonregulatory responsibilities for lead are under the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, the Toxic Substance and Control Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the EPA’s Urban Environmental Initiatives.

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PART I

Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

What You Should Know about Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is a serious but preventable health problem. Lead can cause permanent damage to children—especially unborn children, infants, toddlers, and children under six years old. Children are generally at greater risk than adults because they are more sensitive to lead’s damaging effects and because they put things in their mouths. If these things contain lead or have lead dust on them, the lead will poison the children and may stay in their bodies. No amount of lead in the body is safe.

Lead’s Lasting Impact

Lead is a poison that affects virtually every system of the body. It is particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of fetuses and young children.

The effects of lead depend upon the level of lead in the blood. For example, in children, very high levels can cause deafness, blindness, coma, convulsions, and even death. Moderate levels, too, can harm the brain and nervous system, kidneys, and liver. Even very low levels, which do not cause any obvious symptoms, are associated with decreased intelligence, behavioral problems, decreased growth, impaired hearing, and decreased ability to maintain a steady posture.

Moreover, these problems remain long after childhood. In comparison with children who have not been exposed to lead, children who have been exposed were much more likely to have reading difficulties, poor vocabulary, attention problems, poor fine-motor coordination, greater school absenteeism, and lower class ranking, and to drop out of high school.

Sources of Lead

People everywhere are exposed to lead. Lead dust and lead-based paint are the major sources of lead poisoning in children. If lead paint weathers, flakes, or becomes chalky, or if it is heated or sanded during home repairs or renovations, it may produce dangerous dust (which may collect on children’s toys or hands and be eaten) or dangerous fumes (which children may inhale). Children may eat lead paint chips because they taste sweet, and lead paint may sometimes be found on old or imported toys. Adults who work in
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

lead-related industries or crafts may accidentally bring home lead dust on their clothing, and this dust may poison the air that children breathe. Lead can get into drinking water from lead pipes and solder. Lead can also be found in lead-glazed dinnerware, lead crystal, contaminated soil and the food grown in it, cosmetics, some folk remedies, imported canned food, printing inks, batteries, and bullets.

Testing

Lead poisoning is not always obvious. The only way to detect it is through a simple blood test. Children between one and two years old are very susceptible to lead poisoning and should be screened, especially if they live in high-risk areas or housing. Children between three and six years old who live in these areas and have not yet been tested should also be screened. Testing may be done through the local doctor, health clinic, or health department. If any one person in the household is diagnosed with lead poisoning, all other members of the household should also be tested.

Results

In Connecticut, a child is considered to have an elevated blood lead level if tests show between 10 and 20 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood. A child is considered lead poisoned if the blood lead level is 20 micrograms per deciliter of blood or higher.

Response

No amount of lead is safe. If a child has elevated levels, parents and guardians should check the child’s environment for sources of lead. If a child is lead poisoned, the law requires a home inspection; in addition, long-term medical treatment may be required. In both cases, a balanced diet, low in fat and with enough iron, calcium, and zinc, may help to reduce the damaging effects of lead.

Prevention

To prevent this harmful disease, homes, daycare facilities, and other places where children play or spend a lot of time should be tested. Dust, loose paint chips, soil, dishes, and water can all be tested for lead. State and local health departments can provide information about how to take samples and what to do if dangerous levels are found. They can also provide additional information about lead poisoning and may provide lists of licensed lead consultants. You may call ________________ for further information.
Symptoms of Lead Poisoning

Children with lead poisoning may not look or act sick. Even if the children do show some signs of lead poisoning, these symptoms can often be mistaken for other illnesses, such as the flu. Early symptoms may include tiredness or restlessness, headache, stomachache, constipation, irritability, and poor appetite. As more lead accumulates, children may become clumsy and weak, and they may lose skills that they have already learned. More severe symptoms may include vomiting, loss of sight or hearing, and lapses in consciousness (that is, going in and out of consciousness).

Symptoms of Lead Poisoning at Various Stages of Development

Many of these symptoms, however, may also indicate other health conditions or learning and behavior problems. In addition, children who are not lead poisoned may also show some of these symptoms from time to time, although to a much milder degree.

For example, all babies may be fussy occasionally, but a baby with lead poisoning may be fussy most of the time. Therefore, if children seem to have these symptoms to an unusual extent, there may be cause for concern. The parents, guardians, or other adults responsible for the children’s well-being should always consult the doctor immediately if they suspect lead poisoning and ask for a blood test.

Some of these symptoms may make the parents, guardians, or caregivers feel annoyed or resentful and therefore less affectionate toward the child. They may feel like talking less and spending less time with that child. Understanding that these problems are caused by lead poisoning may help the adults to handle the children more effectively.
Behaviors Associated with Lead Poisoning

Infants and Toddlers
- Cry, whine, or fuss excessively
- Have colic
- Have feeding problems
  - Don’t suck well
  - Cry while eating
  - Don’t have regular eating patterns
  - Seem fussy about eating
- Have sleep problems
  - Sleep too much or too little
  - Are restless while sleeping
  - Have difficulty falling asleep
- Waken easily
- Seem very sensitive to, and unhappy about, touch, tastes, noises, smells, or sounds
- Seem irritable, cranky, uncooperative, difficult to care for
- Are difficult or impossible to soothe or comfort
- Do not seem to like being cuddled
- Seem to be late in babbling and saying first words
- Don’t smile often

Preschoolers
- Seem excessively active
- Are very uncooperative
- Refuse to follow requests or directions
- Have difficulty in toilet training
- Have difficulty following directions
- Act impulsively
- Are fidgety, squirmy
- Have difficulty remaining seated
- Are easily distracted
- Have difficulty paying attention while playing or performing simple tasks
- Talk excessively
- Interrupt others frequently
- Often shift from one uncompleted activity to another
- Often do not seem to listen to what is being said to them

Elementary School Children
- Fail to finish class assignments
- Disrupt their classes
- Perform poorly in school
- Are unable to tolerate frustration
- Have problems learning
- Are easily distracted
- Need a lot of supervision
- Have problems with other children
- Frequently call out in class
- Have difficulty staying seated
- Have difficulty concentrating
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

What to Do If You Suspect Lead Poisoning

If parents or guardians suspect lead poisoning, they should not wait for symptoms to appear before having their children tested.

Special Causes for Concern

Many houses and apartment buildings built before 1978 have paint that contains lead. (In 1978, the U.S. government banned lead-based paint in housing.) As a result, the possibility of lead poisoning may be greater for children who live in or frequently visit deteriorating housing that was built before 1978, because children may eat paint chips and may eat or breathe in paint dust. Children who live in housing that was built before 1978 and that has recently been or is now being remodeled or renovated are especially at risk, because the home repairs can create lead dust and paint chips that children may swallow.

Other children who are at greater risk are the brothers, sisters, housemates, and playmates of children known to have lead poisoning. In addition, children who live with household members who work in lead-related jobs or who have lead-related hobbies (for example, stained glass or pottery makers, battery recycling plant workers) may also be at risk.

Testing

Blood tests can determine a child’s lead level. There are two ways to collect blood for testing. The first, a fingerstick, screens for the presence of lead. The child’s finger is pricked to obtain a blood sample, which is sent to a laboratory for analysis. If the lead level is high, the results must be checked with a second test, called a venipuncture, which involves taking blood from a vein. This second sample is also sent to a laboratory for analysis.

Screening Agencies

Family doctors and pediatricians can provide lead poisoning screening. Other agencies that may offer these services include local health departments, health clinics, Head Start programs, community health fairs, hospital pediatric outpatient departments, visiting nurse associations, and well-child clinics.

Material prepared by Maureen T. Mulroy, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

Questions to Ask the Doctor

1. How will you test my child for lead?
2. What are the differences between lead tests?
3. What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?
4. What are the effects of lead poisoning?
5. What is my child’s blood lead level?
6. What do the test results mean?
7. If treatment is needed, what treatment is recommended?
8. What are the side effects of the treatment?
9. When should my child be tested again?
10. What foods should my child be eating at this time?
11. When can other family members be tested?

If a Child Has Been Exposed to Lead

If blood tests show that a child has been exposed to lead, parents or guardians should make sure that the following steps occur:
1. The family should receive education about childhood lead poisoning and how to prevent it.
2. The child should receive appropriate follow-up blood lead testing and/or medical evaluation.
3. If the child’s blood lead level is high, medical treatment should be discussed with the doctor.
4. If the child is lead poisoned, a home inspection will be made by local public health agencies to help identify the sources of lead.
5. If the child is lead poisoned and the source of lead is in the home, the child should not be allowed to return to that home until the source of lead has been found and abated. (In some cases, relocation assistance may be available.) If the source of lead is elsewhere, the child should not return to that environment.

Help with Behavioral Concerns

Children who have been exposed to high levels of lead during their early years often show various challenging behaviors at home and in school. Parents may need outside advice and assistance for help in raising these children. Sources of such assistance may include the family doctor or pediatrician, public health clinic, child guidance clinic, infant stimulation programs, parent and family support groups, public school special education service units or resource centers, well-baby clinics, parent education classes, mental health centers, and early intervention programs.
Handling Lead Hazards from the Environment

Lead is a toxic (poisonous) element. Although eliminating all exposure to lead in the environment is impossible, knowing where lead comes from can help people to reduce the risk of exposure and therefore to prevent lead poisoning.

Lead in the Air

Lead particles and fumes can get into the air if lead-based paint or varnish peels or flakes. Lead can also enter the air from industrial exhaust, especially near an industrial site. In any area where lead dust and chips may fall, wet mop and wipe surfaces daily with a solution of water and detergent. Throw away any cleaning rags.

Lead particles and fumes can get into the air if lead-based paint is removed by sanding, heating, or scraping. *Before you start to renovate,* have your paint tested for lead. If the paint contains lead, request information from your local health department concerning safe removal. In addition, if there are children under six or pregnant women in the household, consider delaying the renovation or hire a licensed lead removal professional to do the work. (Lists of such professionals can be obtained from your state or local health department.)

If a member of the household works with lead solder or in a lead industry (such as a battery plant, radiator repair shop, lead smelter, or construction), that person could carry lead particles home on his or her clothing, shoes, and hair. Adults should shower, wash their hair, and change their clothing and shoes before leaving work.

Burning lead-painted wood creates lead fumes, so do not burn it. Call your refuse collector to determine safe ways of disposing of lead-painted wood.

Lead in the Water

In very old homes, lead can get into the water from lead pipes. In newer homes, lead can get into the water from pipes connecting to the street or from lead solder. Lead-lined water coolers and fixtures can also put lead in the water.
Have your water tested for lead. (Lists of labs accredited to do lead testing can be obtained from your state or local health department.) If lead is present, run water until it runs cold before using it, especially if you have not used the water for a few hours. Use only cold water to drink or to make baby formula, prepare or cook food, or make coffee, tea, or other beverages.

**Lead in the Soil**

Lead can get into the soil from lead fumes, dust in the air, and paint. Have the soil tested for lead. If the soil is contaminated, cover it with grass, bushes, mulch, or pavement to prevent children from playing there. Clean or remove your shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking lead inside. If you have pets that go outdoors, clean their feet before you allow them inside. Do not plant a vegetable garden in contaminated soil.

Lead can sometimes be found in sand. If you install a sandbox, be sure to purchase lead-free sand.

**Lead from Hobbies or Work**

When people hold leaded items, lead can remain on the hands. Craftspeople, artists, and sports people often handle items such as bullets, fishing sinkers, lead powder, batteries, lead solder, curtain weights, jewelry, artists’ paints, and other lead items. Immediately after handling any leaded items, always wash your hands thoroughly.

Imported comic books and other printed materials may contain lead. Keep young children from playing with or chewing on these items.

**In General**

Always wash your hands thoroughly before handling food or touching children or anything they can touch.
Handling Lead Hazards in the Home

If you suspect lead hazards in your home, you can take some simple precautions to help reduce the risk to your family.

Lead in Food

Food grown in contaminated soil or exposed to contaminated air can contain lead. If you live near a highway or lead industry, or if you want to plant a garden near an old house, have the soil tested before you plant.

Some imported canned goods have seams that are soldered with lead. Once these cans are open, the foods may become contaminated, especially if the food is acidic (such as tomatoes). As soon as you open a can, remove the food and store leftovers in glass, plastic, or stainless steel containers.

Lead in Dishes and Plastic Bags

Some old dishes, imported or homemade pottery, lead crystal, and pewter may contain lead. Dishes passed down by grandparents or bought at tag sales may have been made before the government issued current safety standards. Pottery can be tested, and if it contains lead, do not use it for food. Crystal and pewter may be used occasionally for serving, but do not store food or beverages, especially those containing alcohol or acid, in them. Never use crystal baby bottles.

Plastic bags used to package bread, baked goods, and other foods are often printed with inks containing lead. If you reuse a plastic bag, be sure that the printing stays on the outside, not in direct contact with the food.

Lead from Paint Dust or Chips

Lead paint tastes sweet, so young children—who love to put things in their mouths—may chew on lead-painted or lead-varnished doorways, stair railings, window frames and sills, radiators, cribs, furniture, toys, and other surfaces. Try to prevent children from putting nonfood items into their mouths. If possible, replace lead-painted items with safe ones. Place barriers (sofas, tables) in front of lead-painted areas if possible. If the paint is not flaking, chalking, peeling, or chipping, you may repaint these areas with unleaded paint.
Preventing Lead Poisoning in Children

Clean suspect surfaces regularly with a solution of water and detergent. Thoroughly rinse sponges and mop heads, and throw away used cleaning rags.

Wash children’s toys, stuffed animals, bottles, pacifiers, and other items frequently.

Lead dust may collect in wall-to-wall carpet. Remove it or clean it with a detergent. Vacuum with a vacuum cleaner equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

Many imported miniblinds also contain lead. In areas where children are present, these blinds should be replaced.

Lead in Folk Remedies and Cosmetics

Many non-Western medicines and cosmetics contain substantial quantities of lead and other metals. In fact, lead compounds may be major ingredients in some traditional medicines, which are commonly made by traditional healers.

Lead poisoning from these sources has been found among Arabic, East Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Latin American cultures. Among the folk remedies and cosmetics that contain lead are:

- alarcon
- bali goli
- greta
- pay-oo-ah
- alkohl
- coral
- kohl
- rueda
- azarcon
- ghasard
- liga
- surma

Do not use these products, and keep children away from them.

In General

Wash children’s hands frequently, especially before eating.

Be sure that children eat nutritious meals that are low in fat and have appropriate amounts of iron, calcium, and zinc. Children with good diets absorb less lead. Also, be sure that children get enough to eat, because empty stomachs absorb lead more easily.
Foods That May Help to Fight Lead’s Harmful Effects

Lead harms a child’s body in many ways. Lead may fool the body into thinking it is iron, calcium or zinc—which are minerals that children need to be healthy. Lead may take the place of these nutrients in the body, but it cannot do their jobs. Instead, it prevents the body from working properly.

Lead is most harmful at high doses, and when there is not enough iron, calcium, and zinc to compete with the lead. Many children have both low iron (iron deficiency anemia) and lead poisoning. Getting enough of these minerals may help to lower the amount of lead the body takes in. However, taking too much iron, calcium, and zinc will not prevent lead poisoning and could also be harmful.

Among people who are exposed to lead, the risk of lead poisoning is particularly high among infants, preschool children, pregnant and nursing women, and other people who do not have well-balanced diets or who do not get enough food to eat. Lead is absorbed more easily on an empty stomach.

Choosing a diet that is low in fat may also help keep more lead out of the body.

A Balanced Diet

Giving children a balanced diet may help to lower the dangerous effects of lead. A balanced diet contains a variety of food from five food groups:

- breads, cereals, and grains 6–11 servings daily
- vegetables 3–5 servings daily
- fruit 2–4 servings daily
- milk and milk products 2–3 servings daily
- meat, chicken, fish, nuts, dried beans, and lentils 2–3 servings daily

Younger children need smaller servings than older children or adults, and more active people need the larger number of servings from each group.
Foods That Provide Calcium

Milk and milk products are usually good sources of calcium. Give whole milk to children 1–2 years old, lowfat milk to children over 2 years old.

- **Milk**: 2–3 cups per day
- **Yogurt**: lowfat or nonfat (contains the same amount of calcium as milk)
- **Cheese** (for snacks and cooking): macaroni and cheese, pizza, tacos, vegetable topping
- **Other foods made with milk**: puddings, soups, custards, flans, pancakes

Some children, however, cannot digest or are allergic to milk and milk products. Other, nondairy sources of calcium are:

- **Dark green leafy vegetables**: kale, collard greens, broccoli
- **Tofu** (processed soybean curd)
- **Sardines or canned salmon** (with bones—could be a choking hazard for young children)

Foods That Provide Iron

The following foods contain iron in a form that is easy for the body to use:

- **Lean red meat**: pork and beef
- **Chicken and turkey**
- **Clams, oysters, and mussels**
- **Sardines, tuna, and other fish**

The following foods contain iron that is more usable if it is eaten at the same meal as food high in vitamin C (for example, oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, cantaloupe, green peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, and potatoes):

- **Iron-fortified hot and cold cereals**
- **Dark green leafy vegetables**: broccoli, spinach
- **Dried beans**: pinto, red, kidney, navy, garbanzo
- **Split peas and lentils**
- **Eggs**
- **Dried fruit** (could be a choking hazard for children under 3): raisins, prunes, figs
- **Peanut butter** (could be a choking hazard for children under 3, and children are often allergic to it)
- **Wheat germ**

Foods That Provide Zinc

- **Chicken or turkey**
- **Lean red meat**: pork and beef
- **Fish**
- **Milk and cheese**
- **Clams, oysters, mussels, and crab**
- **Dried beans and lentils**
- **Eggs**
A Healthy Diet to Fight Lead’s Harmful Effects

Feeding children a balanced diet can help keep them healthy. A balanced diet that is low in fat can provide all the vitamins and minerals children need to fight lead’s harmful effects.

People who eat a lot of fat seem to absorb lead more easily. Although some fat is needed for healthy skin, nerves, and energy, children over the age of two and adults may benefit by a diet relatively low in fat.

Note: Children under two years old need more fat than older children. Infants are usually fed breast milk or formula until about the age of one year. Once they are weaned, they should be given whole milk until age two. After age two, they may be given lowfat milk.

Hints for Reducing Fat in the Diet

- Limit foods from fast-food restaurants. Foods commonly served in these restaurants—such as deluxe hamburgers, fried chicken, hot dogs, fried fish, French fries, and ice cream—are usually very high in fat.
- Limit snack foods and desserts such as doughnuts, potato chips, corn chips, pies, cupcakes, pastries, and chocolate. When you do eat or serve these items, substitute lowfat versions (for example, use lowfat frozen yogurt instead of ice cream).
- Offer children vegetables, fruits, whole-grain breads or cereals, yogurt, and cheese as healthy snacks.
- Use less oil, butter, lard, and margarine in cooking and on foods.
- If you do eat or prepare high-fat foods, try to do so less often. When you do eat them, have smaller servings (one scoop of ice cream instead of two).
- Choose lowfat dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.) for children over the age of two years.
- Introduce children over the age of two years to other lowfat foods, so they can learn to like the taste.
- Read package labels to find hidden fats, such as vegetable oils, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, and butter. Limit foods that list these and other fats among the first two or three ingredients.
- Look for foods that contain less than 3 grams of fat per serving. These are lowfat foods.
## A Day of Nutritious Foods

Below is a sample menu of healthy foods for a three- or four-year-old child. Keep in mind that each child is different, and that a preschooler’s appetite may change from one day to the next.

### Breakfast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>iron-fortified unsweetened cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>milk (lowfat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 slice</td>
<td>whole wheat toast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ tb.</td>
<td>peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp.</td>
<td>jam (or jelly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>apple juice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Midmorning Snack

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>vanilla or other flavored yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½</td>
<td>peach (canned, in juice) or fresh fruit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lunch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>tuna salad sandwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>enriched or whole-grain bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>clam chowder or lentil soup or bean soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>small whole-grain crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>milk (lowfat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½</td>
<td>small carrot, cut into thin sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>apple, peeled and cut up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Midafternoon Snack

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>oatmeal cookie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>milk (lowfat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½</td>
<td>orange or tangerine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dinner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>cooked enriched macaroni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 oz.</td>
<td>lean ground beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup</td>
<td>spaghetti sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup</td>
<td>cooked spinach or broccoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>milk (lowfat)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evening Snack

For additional information, contact the local Cooperative Extension System office or Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.
Management Techniques for Challenging Children

When children are lead poisoned, they may show various learning and behavior problems. These challenging children frequently feel that they are bad, and these feelings may make them angry and aggressive. Caring adults—parents, daycare providers, or others—can help by spending short periods of time one-on-one with these children in pleasant activities, such as reading a story or doing a project. Such activities help develop warm relationships, and children often begin to feel better about themselves.

Note that although challenging behaviors may indicate lead poisoning, they may also suggest other problems.

Routines

Challenging children usually behave more appropriately if they have a daily routine, an established sequence of events. The routine may include wake-up time, toileting, washing, breakfast, dressing, free play, leave for sitter/daycare/school, snack on return home, outdoor play, TV, dinner, wash up, and bedtime. A routine should allow for some flexibility but it should also provide a regular structure for the child’s day. Children should know what to expect and what their rules are for the routine.

Adjust the Environment

Adults should try to arrange the environment so that children do not have opportunities to display inappropriate behaviors. For example, if a child becomes overstimulated by noise, use carpeting to reduce the sound level, limit the number of children who can play in an area at any one time, and use plastic toys rather than metal ones.

Label Behaviors and Give Positive Directions

Use nonjudgmental labels to identify inappropriate behaviors, and tell children what they need to do about them. For example, “You’re overexcited. You need to take a break before something gets broken.” Or, “I know you’re having trouble paying attention, but I want you to look at me and listen to my instructions.”
Techniques for Specific Problems

For very active children: Step in before children lose control. Tell them they are too excited. They may move to another activity, cool off with a quiet activity (for example, reading or playing with clay), or blow off steam by active but safe play. Stay calm and speak with a soft voice, even if the children are screaming. Act as a good role model, and show the children that you are under control, even if they are not.

For children who are easily distracted: Move children to new activities if they can no longer concentrate on a task or give them a break and have them return to the task later. Remember that most preschool children have relatively short attention spans.

For unpredictable children: Provide a structured routine so that children know what to expect. Don’t make a big fuss over their unpredictable traits. For example, at mealtime, tell them they are expected to be at the table, but don’t make them eat. Then don’t keep them very long at the table.

For children who have trouble stopping an activity: Warn children that the end of the activity is approaching. Give them limits that they can understand: “You can push the lever two more times, and then you must stop.”

For children whose senses are extremely sensitive: Some children are very sensitive to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. When possible, adjust the environment and adapt to their wishes: reduce loud noises and bright lights, let Sue wear the same coat every day, and give Jamal a peanut butter sandwich for lunch every day. Otherwise, offer the child choices and give her time to adjust gradually. For example, if the child is a picky eater, allow her to choose among a variety of new items and let her get used to seeing and smelling them as others eat them.

For children who withdraw or adapt poorly to new things: Warn the child that something different is about to happen. Tell the child what the sequence of events will be. Allow the child time to adjust to the new situation, watching from the sidelines for a while. Encourage the child to stay near a caring adult during the experience.

For children with negative moods: Ignore the negative mood or attitude, which you cannot change, and concentrate on the child’s behavior. Encourage and praise behaviors that you feel are positive, and ignore the mood.
PART II

Regulations and Resources
Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Regulations

The Connecticut Department of Public Health has issued a series of lead poisoning prevention and control regulations. These regulations set out the state’s requirements for managing or removing (abating) paint, dust, and soil that contain toxic (poisonous) levels of lead. Their primary purpose is to prevent children from becoming lead poisoned.

Licensing of Child Daycare Facilities

Before child daycare centers, group daycare homes, or family daycare homes are licensed or relicensed by the Department of Public Health, the premises must be examined for defective lead-based paint (that is, lead-based paint that is chipping, peeling, flaking, or chalking). If the licensing specialist finds defective paint during this examination, he/she will take samples from the defective painted surfaces and will notify the local health department. The local health department may conduct a more complete lead inspection. In that case, inspectors would take more samples, including paint from intact as well as defective painted surfaces, water, dust, and soil.

The Department of Public Health is responsible for making sure that childcare facilities meet state licensing regulations. The local health department is responsible for enforcing the lead poisoning prevention and control regulations.

After a local health department finds defective lead-based paint, the childcare licensing specialist from the Department of Public Health must receive written verification that the work needed to correct the problems has been carried out.

If Defective Lead-Based Paint Is Found in a Daycare Facility

If defective lead-based paint is found, appropriate action to deal with that defective paint is required.
In Places Where Children Live

If a child under the age of six lives in a home that also serves as a daycare facility, then defective interior and exterior lead-based paint must be abated there.

Defective lead-based paint may be abated by one of the following methods:

1. Replacement: The lead-containing parts (such as windows, doors, and trim) must be removed or replaced with lead-free parts.

2. Encapsulation: The lead paint must be encapsulated (covered and sealed) with special coatings called encapsulants. The Connecticut Department of Public Health has a list of approved encapsulants.

   NOTE: Regular paints are not encapsulants.

3. Enclosure: The lead paint may be covered with a hard material, such as sheetrock, paneling, or siding.

   NOTE: Wallpaper and contact paper are not acceptable barriers.

4. Removal: The lead paint may be removed by using a chemical stripper or by wet scraping. It should not be removed by a power sander unless the sander has a vacuum with a HEPA filter, which traps very small particles.

All of the above lead abatement strategies are best accomplished by licensed and certified professionals. Any professional who performs lead paint abatement or lead inspections at a childcare facility must be certified by the Department of Public Health. The professional must also work under the auspices of a contractor licensed by the State of Connecticut.

In Places Where Children Do Not Live

If a child under six does not live in the daycare facility, the local health department may consider other options for that facility, such as repairing the paint and repainting. The childcare provider should contact the local health department to discuss these options.